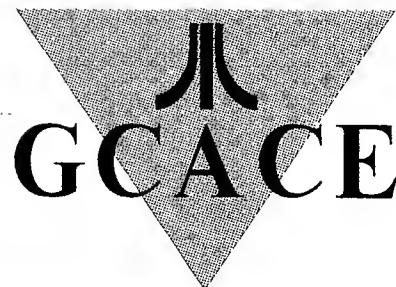


XIO3



Garden City Atari Computer Enthusiasts
1003 Amphion St. Victoria, B.C. Canada V8S 4G2

MAY/JUNE 1999

ATARI® NEWS AND RUMOURS

by Rowland Grant

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ATARI®

Once there was a company called Atari. It made video game machines for arcades. Later Atari made video game machines for the home. Then it made computers. Atari made a lot of money from home video games, but it lost money on its excellent computers. Finally Atari lost a lot of money on its home video games. Atari was broken up and the money-losing parts were sold as Atari Corp to Jack Tramiel and friends. Jack concentrated on computers, and for a few years Atari Corp was profitable. Slowly Atari Corp fell behind the competition. It began to lose money. Atari Corp abandoned its computers in favour of a new video game machine. This failed to make a profit. Atari Corp used its remaining assets to buy into a hard drive manufacturer called JTS. Atari Corp became JTS. But JTS did not make a profit either. Last December JTS applied to restructure itself under the US Chapter 11 bankruptcy legislation. This was not successful. In February, JTS went under voluntary liquidation. What's left is 121 million in liabilities and about 4 million in assets. The bond holders will get about 3 cents on the dollar if they are lucky. It's a wonder that JTS managed to hang on as long as it did.

Of course all the Atari assets held by JTS were bought by Hasbro prior to the JTS collapse. Unfortunately, Hasbro only wanted to use the classic Atari game titles, and was not interested in any Atari hardware, past present or future. Since games for the Atari Jaguar must be encrypted to run, further release of games for the Jaguar required the cooperation of Hasbro. After some consideration, Hasbro Interactive has decided to make the Atari Jaguar an open platform. In a recent announcement, Hasbro Interactive

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MEMBERSHIP

Membership dues are \$25 per family per year. Membership includes a subscription to this newsletter, access to over 5000 8-bit public domain disks and 210 ST disks in our library and literally thousands of 8-bit and ST PD files on various CDs.

MEETINGS

Meetings will be held in the Nellie McClung branch of the Library at 3950 Cedar Hill Road (corner of McKenzie) on the fourth Thursday of each month. All meetings are at 7 pm. There is no meeting in the month of December.

EDITORIAL

The following is a reprint from the April, 1999 *Phoenix* newsletter.

MEMO

Year 2000 Solution

Corporate has determined that there is no longer any need for network or software applications support. The goal is to remove all computers from the desktop by June 1999. Instead, everybody will be provided with an Etch-A-Sketch. There are many sound reasons for doing this:

1. No Y2K problems. 2. No technical glitches keeping work from being done. 3. No more wasted time reading and writing emails.

Etch-A-Sketch Technical Support

Q: My Etch-A-Sketch has all these funny lines all over the screen.

How do I get rid of them?

A: Pick it up and shake it.

Q: How do I turn my Etch-A-Sketch off?

A: Pick it up and shake it.

Q: What's the shortcut for Undo?

A: Pick it up and shake it.

Q: How do I create a new document window?

A: Pick it up and shake it.

Q: How do I set the background and foreground to the same colour?

A: Pick it up and shake it.

Q: How do I delete a document on my Etch-A-Sketch?

A: Pick it up and shake it.

Q: How do I save my Etch-A-Sketch document?

A: Don't pick it up and shake it.

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Bellcom disks John Picken 598-2386
 DOS & Operating System John Picken 598-2386
 Games Ted Skrecky 598-6173
 Programming John Picken 598-2386
 Word Processing John Picken 598-2386

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 TOS & Operating System John Towler 382-5083
 Word Processing Gord Hooper 475-0857

Hardware:

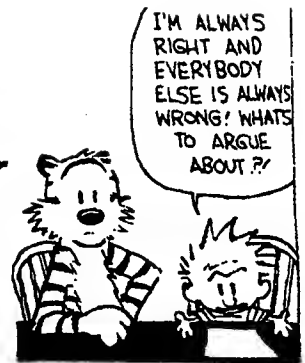
Repairs and Sales Gord Hooper 475-0857
 Modem & printer setup John Picken 598-2386

Other Computers:

Apple Macintosh John Towler 382-5083
 Commodore Amiga Ted Skrecky 598-6173
 IBM's and clones Rowland Grant 598-3661
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PEEKing Around

by Gordon F. Hooper



Welcome to returning member DAN FERGUSON. He was a member years ago with an 8-bit and now he has an ST. Our corresponding member in North Vancouver, ART NEWMAN, has renewed. Welcome back!... TED SKRECKY was having a great time at the May general meeting demonstrating games. One highlight was a game called Schoolyard Slaughter. You have your choice of weapons and get to kill little children during recess. Who says the best games are made for the PCs?... Don't ask ROWLAND GRANT for a loan these days. He informs me it cost him \$1600 for champagne at his son's wedding over in Vancouver. How do I get invitations to these parties?... CRAIG CARMICHAEL received a letter from WILLIAM RUBLE in Hawaii asking for information on where he can purchase software for his Falcon. He is wanting to write an autobiography for his family on his experiences during his youth, WWII, Korea and Vietnam. After retiring from the armed services in 1971, he became a police lieutenant, and retired again in 1997. Craig passed the letter on to me, and I will reply, along with an

invitation to become our first corresponding member from Hawaii... URGENT: More dirt on GCACE members desperately needed! Phone GORD at 475-0857...

On to the joke department. These are from a Web site called Joke Of The Day, which automatically sends an email to me every day.

A woman gets home, runs into her house, slams the door and shouts, "Honey, pack your bags, I won the lottery."

The husband says, "Wow! That's great! Should I pack for the ocean or should I pack for the mountains?"

She says, "I don't care. Just get the hell out!"

The real estate boss got a hot new secretary, and he decided to put some moves on her. But within a few weeks, he is feeling displeased at the way she is working, not caring, coming to work late, and so on. Finally, he pulls her aside, and has a little talk with her. "Listen, baby, we may have gone to bed together a few times, but who said you

could start coming in late and slacking off?" The secretary's reply, "My lawyer!"

One day two boys were playing by a stream. One of the boys saw a bush and went over to it and the other boy couldn't figure out why his friend was at the bush so long. The other boy went over to the bush and looked. They were looking at a woman bathing naked in the steam. All of a sudden the second boy took off running.

The first boy couldn't understand why he ran away so he took off after his friend. Finally, he caught up to him and asked why he ran away. The boy said to his friend, "My mom told me if I ever saw a naked lady I would turn to stone, and I felt something getting hard, so I ran."

BEN




released all rights that it may have to the Atari Jaguar game system. This means that anyone developing games for the Jaguar will not have to obtain a licence agreement from Hasbro. "We realize there is a passionate audience of diehard Atari fans who want to keep the Jaguar system alive, and we don't want to prevent them from doing that. We will not interfere with the efforts of software developers to create software for the Jaguar system." I understand that several Jaguar game developers awaiting encryption permission were contacted by Hasbro confirming its intentions. This will be welcome news to Carl Forhan. He has just set up Songbird Productions to market games for the Atari Jaguar and Lynx. Carl has been developing video games as a hobby. He intends to market a Jaguar version of the game Protector. This game was popular years ago on the Atari 8-bit.

Titan Designs in Britain is changing its name to Core Design. Titan has supported of the Atari platform for some years. It has been the source of many clever accessories for TOS computers. I notice that under the Core Design label it is also marketing low priced PC clones. However, Titan/Core has also announced some interesting new products for Falcon computers. First is the Eclipse adaptor. This accepts standard PCI cards. Currently Core is evaluating the use of 4MB ATI graphics cards. Core also supplies fVDI software that enables the Falcon to use the graphics card. Apparently fDVI is part of the Fenix OS which is being developed as a TOS replacement. The Eclipse with an ATI graphics card could create 1600x1200 pixel screens using 16 bit colour. It could respond 15 times as fast as a Falcon's standard screen output. Core Design is expecting to

have the Eclipse in production by June. The complete graphics system including, Eclipse, ATI charger card (featuring the RageII 3D chipset) and fDVD software will cost about 200 ukp.

Also under development at Core Design is the Tempest accelerator for the Falcon. The Tempest will use a Power PC processor, probably a 603e type, running up to 266Mhz. To handle Atari software, the Power PC would run in emulator mode (68020). Even so, a Falcon with a Tempest accelerator might have a speed increase of up 15



**Hasbro Interactive
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game system...**

times. Rumours are that the Tempest will support up to 256MB of TT RAM. It could have USB ports as well. The Tempest may be available later this year.

While Core design is working on the Fenix TOS replacement, Centek in France is still trying to put out the Phenix computer. Centek is also developing its own TOS replacement. Are Fenix OS and Phenix OS one and the same? Anyway, Centek has abandoned the initial Phenix design which was based on the Motorola 68040 CPU. The new Phenix will use the 68060 chip running at 80MHz. Prices of the 68060 have decreased somewhat making its use feasible. The Phenix computer will have PCI slots. Cards containing DSP

chips will speed up data handling too. Using fast RAM the Phenix will run its bus at the same frequency as the CPU, however some compromise is necessary for the DSP boards. Centek says that Phenix should be in production after June this year. How soon after June? After all, we have been waiting about two years for the Phenix 040 to go into production.

Wizztronics was also working on a TOS computer and an accelerator for the Falcon. I understand that all Atari development has been shelved. Wizztronics is investing its resources in a PC line of computers. Wizztronics still has supplies of Falcon memory cards, IDE adapters and Sound Pool software. While Steve Cohen would like to get back to making a TOS computer, his company needs to make some money. I hope they find it in the PC market.

There is another PC market product of interest. MGI decided to cancel all development and distribution of MGI Calamus Digital Publisher v2 for Windows. But Calamus SL for TOS computers is still under development in Germany. The latest version, Calamus SL99, can run on a PC under Windows. The PC package for Windows comes with an embedded emulator, so that the Motorola 68000 code will run on an Intel machine. There is also a Macintosh package that includes Mag-iMac and NVDI to run the Calamus SL99 software. There is really only one Calamus and the documentation is the same for all platforms. There are some small differences, for instance the PC version can use Windows fonts. Calamus SL99 is much improved over earlier versions and the prices are fairly high, but considering the cost of alternate software on other platforms Calamus users will probably find the new version worth while.

Development continues on other ST software. For instance, a new Diamond Back backup program is in the

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works with support for greater capacity devices, Minix, TAR format tapes, and maybe even CD-ROM support. Henk Robbers of Holland has released TT-Digger ver 5.4, and interactive disassembler. Francois Le Coat has released Eureka 2.12, his 2D Graph Descriptor and 3D Modeller. This fairly sophisticated software has been under continuous development since 1987. Nima Montaser reports that his ScanX software is now compatible with FAX Astra 600 series scanners. He says that he has written the code to handle Epson GT Scanners, but he doesn't have an Epson scanner to test it.

The German company R.O.M. publishes that popular Papyrus document processor. It is now releasing Papyrus Word, Papyrus Office and Papyrus Base. All of R.O.M.'s software is under active development, but it mainly serves the TOS market in Germany. ASH is also an active developer in Germany. While products such as MagiC or CAB are well known elsewhere, software such as the database Phoenix 5.0 or the fabled word processor Signum 4.5 is only available in Germany.

Brian Watson reports that he is still supporting his Protex word processor. Protex is now operating as a mail-order business. Apparently the PC and ST versions of Protex are selling, as is the version for the 8-bit Amstrad. The Amiga version of Protex has been dropped. In the world of emulators, Mark Slagell has released version 1.08 of TOSBOX, a ST emulator for PC platforms. You do need to prepare a TOS image file for TOSBOX to work. Some say that TOSBOX is the best ST emulator available. It's shareware.

OXO Systems announced that Wensuite 3 version 1.0 is available. The beta version got poor reviews. I hope that they have fixed everything. According to OXO, Wensuite can now handle frames and animated graphics. It is very stable, very fast and the email and

newsgroup modules work together perfectly (they say). The reviewers agree that Wensuite is fast. OXO has also released Espresso, a HTML page designer that supports multiple frames, animated and transparent GIF images. Future support for Java Script is promised. Wensuite 3 on disk costs 80FFr (about \$20 CDN), Espresso for Wensuite is 300FFr (\$75). This all sounds good, but OXO doesn't have its own web page anymore. Rather strange for a company selling web page creation software.

Atari Central was a web site previously owned by Toad computers. Now Atari Central is back online with many of the original messages. Because most of the messages concern the ST, the once general Atari board has been renamed the ST+ board. There is a Jaguar forum also. Computer Dungeon, a seller of new and used Atari software and accessories, is going out of business. Recently the Dungeon tried to sell through the web only. Sales collapsed. So the Computer Dungeon is having an online garage sale of its remaining stock, no reasonable offer refused. Floppyshop in Britain closed a few months back, again due to a dwindling user base. However, Floppyshop's surplus stock of commercial products and the distribution rights to most of its CD-ROM compilations have been acquired by Paul Glover of FaST Club. The Public Domain library that was such an important part of Floppyshop's operation has been rescued by Andrew Plumridge of Falcon's Nest Public Domain Library.

The Nordic Atari Show is slated to take place in Gothenburg, Sweden in June. Last year the Milan computer was previewed at the show, this year they are hoping to have the Centek Phenix 060 computer. The theme of the show is networking with TOS computers. There will be five Hades computers networked using Bionet and SmartNet98 software. Back in December 1990, they held the ST News International Christmas Coding

Convention in Oss Netherlands. There is an attempt to hold a reunion for December 2000. It would be an interesting retrospective.

About a year ago Yamaha released its CS1x synthesizer. In the synth section of the Yamaha website there are various software utilities for the CS1x. Included are Cubase mixermaps for the PC, Mac and Atari ST. Yes, Yamaha recognises that the old ST is still widely used in the music world. I notice that one of the leading 3D modelling software titles is 3D Studio Max, which sells for \$3495 (US). The author is Tom Hudson. Tom developed the CAD 3D series and Degas paint software for the ST. Tom's experience in 3D work goes back to the Atari 8-bit. I recall that he published a simple 3D rendering program for the Atari 800 in Analog magazine about 15 years ago.

In the last issue of XIO3 I discussed the Y2K problem. Philip Taylor has investigated the Atari STe and finds that there is a Y2K bug of a unique Atari variety. So far I have been able to change into the year 2000 and beyond with no trouble. I am using a Mega STe with TOS 2.05. Still there may be trouble with dates after year 2000 under some circumstances. The fix is to change two numbers in two specific memory locations to zero. I notice that David Bolt has published these locations for all version of TOS on the ST and for Magic 5.11. Using this data it should be fairly simple to create a software patch. Apparently the Falcon computer has different time clock hardware and may not experience this bug.

In a recent conversation it was remarked that the ST didn't have a happy face symbol like the PC. However the ST does have four symbols that combine to form a face, more smug than happy. Apparently the face is a tiny portrait of Dr. "Killer" Bob Dobbs from the Church of the Subgenius. How about that!

Atari Historical Society

by Rowland Grant

While 1983 was a disappointing year for Atari financially, research and development continued at a rapid pace. Atari was planning a new computer to replace the popular 400/800 series. This was to be based on the Motorola 68000 chip. The development project was code named SIERRA 68000. I don't know what happened to this project. Perhaps it didn't pan out. I suggest this because Atari was also helping to finance the Amiga. Moreover, Atari was planning to incorporate the Amiga chip set into another 68000 system with the label 1850XL. Of course when part of Atari was sold to Jack Tramiel, all these projects were dropped. Jack wouldn't buy the Amiga, so Commodore picked it up. Jack had lured the Commodore development team over to Atari. Hence the computer that might have been the successor to the Commodore 64 series, became the Atari ST. So it's only fair that Commodore should have the computer that might have been the successor to the Atari 800 series. Other designs under development at Atari were the 1600XL and 1650XLD. The 1600XL was a combination of a 800XL plus a PC clone using an Intel 8088 cpu. The 1650XLD included a built in disk drive in a 1450XLD case.

I am indebted to Curt Vendel and his Atari Historical Society for the description of the uncompleted or unreleased Atari computer projects. Curt is working on a deal with Atari Games Corp to create an on-line technical library of its coin operated machine manuals for the 1972-82 period. He has also approached Hasbro for the right to publish manuals for Atari's home video game consoles and computers. The Atari Historical Society runs a Virtual Museum website. This has information on all Atari hardware, and many images. The Atari computers section of this site will have subsections devoted to

Atari concepts and designs, including rare project photos.

Curt has also mentioned that one can get on the internet using an Atari 8-bit. This is done using a PC running PC-Gateway software. The Atari is attached to the PC using a null modem. Any terminal or computer can use a PC to access the net using the same method. I presume that the 8-bit is restricted to text and must use its own terminal software.

The traditional BBS is getting rare these days. However, the best Atari BBS software, BBS Express Pro is still under development. This software was recently acquired by Lance Ringquist of Video 61. I understand that Tom Hunt is updating and maintaining BBS Express Pro for Video 61. The company Video 61 & Atari Sales seems to be a software publisher and a distributor of products for Atari platforms.

I notice that Keith Ledbetter, the creator of BBS Express and the Express terminal software admits that he developed some of his 8-bit software on a PC. He did this using his own cross assembler. It is possible to create assembler software that will run on one type of computer but will assemble code for another type. Keith created BBS Express Professional and the code for the Express terminal cartridge on his PC. He sent the code modules over to the Atari 8-bit using a null modem. Some programmers find the PC platform with 80 columns and its greater speed a more convenient programming environment. A number of 6502 cross assemblers are available. The ASSI Atari 65C02 Macro Cross Assembler runs under Windows 9x. It has some special Atari features such as a choice of several formats. Files can be saved as Atari binary or XFD. Another Windows program, Atari Filemanager will convert XFD files to ATR format to run under SIO2PC. This makes transfer of assembled programs convenient. Purists may

criticise the use of PC's for Atari 8-bit development. However, one must remember that almost all of Atari's in-house software development was done on DEC mainframe computers using cross-assemblers.

Still, most Atari software development was done on the Atari 8-bit computer itself. Atari released a couple of assemblers. The Atari Assembler Editor cartridge uses the floating point routines in ROM and is therefore very slow. It was sold for creating small programs and machine code subroutines for BASIC programs. The Atari Macro Assembler was created for larger programs. This assembler takes source code from disk and writes machine code back to disk. The Macro Assembler is much faster, but speed is governed by disk access. Synapse Software, a publisher for the Atari 8-bit, created its own assembler editor called Synassembler. It assembled in computer memory using tokenized code. It was quite fast, but it didn't do macros. Then OSS released Mac/65. It came in a cartridge, and used commands similar to the earlier Atari Assembler Editor. It did macros, and when it assembled in computer memory, Mac/65 was very fast. Mac/65 became the standard in North America. However there was parallel development in Europe where a number of popular assembler editors have been released for the Atari 8-bit.

More recently, Torsten Karworth has released his 130XE+ Makro-Assembler. Like Mac/65 it tokenizes code for speed. It avoids the slow disk access by assembling to a RAM disk. Therefore the Makro-Assembler will only work with an XL or XE computer with 128K or more memory. In addition, programs can be constructed using a linker. This links together modules of compiled machine code to form a running program. I suppose that one must

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Atari Movies

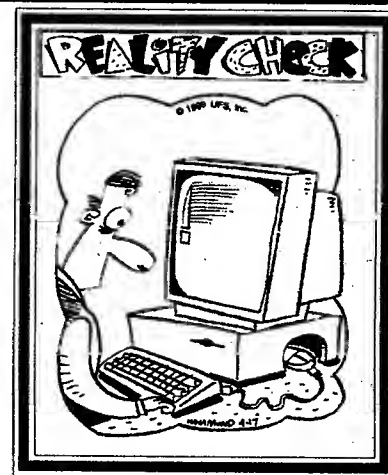
by Rowland Grant

In March, the general meeting featured a series of old Atari advertisements. These were on the PoolDisk Too CD's in a form that requires Quicktime software. Unfortunately we cannot run such files directly on the ST. But they do run on a recent PC or a Macintosh computer. So it was, that Gordon Hooper brought his IBM (eek) to the meeting. There was some confusion with Windows and setting up the software, but eventually the Atari advertisement files were found and displayed as Quicktime movies. There were ads for Atari 8-bit computers. Some of these were not so good. For instance one clip had Alan Alda setting up a 800XL. The ad tried to make the point that Atari computers are easy to connect, but it ended up pointless. The colour and lighting were lousy too. One of the earlier ads for the Atari 400/800 series was excellent, very impressive. Many ads were for games ranging from VCS 2600 to the Jaguar. Most of the Jaguar ads were uninspired, but a couple were very well done. I particularly liked the hell and brimstone preacher ad-

vertising Doom (the game). Whatever their quality, the old ads are an entertaining reminder of our Atari past.

In April we continued the trend of introducing foreign computers to our meetings. Noel Black was to bring his old Macintosh plus computer. The idea was to compare his Mac plus with a Mega ST using the Spectre GCR Macintosh emulation. Both computers use the Motorola 68000 running at 8MHz, both are limited to 4MB of RAM, and both use SCSI hard drives. Due to the failure of transportation arrangements, Noel couldn't bring his Mac. However, Bruce Funk has a Mac SE with hard drive, and he brought it. Spectre GCR running Mac software on the ST seemed to be faster than the Mac SE. Certainly the hard drive and disk drive response seemed much faster, and the screen was larger too. The Mac SE was running under System 7 which may have caused some of the slow down. The Mega/Spectre was running under System 6.05, and this has a lot less overhead. Both of us managed to hang our computers. I was demonstrating Microsoft Word. While showing the Epson printer driver options, I clicked on the

print button when no printer was attached. It was then that I found the disadvantages of emulation, as the stop-print keypresses didn't seem to work, at least not immediately. Very little of the current Mac software will run under System 6.0x, and Spectre GCR cannot run under system 7. The older Mac software is generally no better than equivalent ST software. So for most purposes one might as well stick with the ST, except perhaps for word processors that use a selection of fonts. On the Mac, fonts and printer drivers are easy to set up. Whereas I found GDOS on the Atari ST to be difficult.



8-Bit

Continued From Page 6

program the modules using relocatable code for the linker to work. Torsten's system also comes with compression software. So one can get rather large programs on a floppy disk. Torsten's Makro-Assembler is freeware and comes with much documentation. It's also written in German. Fortunately, Ron Fetzer of Ol' Hackers has done a careful translation of the documents

into English. I recall some years back that Ron performed a somewhat similar service for Turbo BASIC. He has also released a number of original programs, all well documented. It is work done by Ron and others that is keeping Atari 8-bit computers alive.

Stefan Birmanns of Germany has produced an interface for 8-bit Atari's that will access IDE type devices. Usually the interface is used with hard drives. However, many CD-ROM drives are also IDE devices. Stefan says that his interface has an ISO9660 driver which enables the 8-bit to access the CD-ROM like a floppy disk. Most CD's

of 8-bit material store the programs on virtual disks in ATR format. Few CD's may be available that have 8-bit files that could be accessed directly by the Atari 8-bit computer.

Finally, I have heard that someone purchased a grungy Commodore monitor for use with their Atari 8-bit, and asked for advice on cleaning it. While I cleaned mine using soap and a slightly wet rag, there are reports that monitors with smoking deposits have been handled using window cleaner or even shaving soap spray. For extreme situations it was suggested that the case be removed from the electronics and cleaned in a dish washer.

**GCACE Financial Report
March 1999**

Income

Dues	75.00
ST+/PD disk sales	
Coffee	
Donations	
Interest	

Total Income	75.00
---------------------	--------------

Expenses

Newsletter printing	
Newsletter postage	
Other postage	
Room rental	21.40
Coffee expenses	
Office supplies	
Magazine subscriptions	
ST+ printing	
ST + royalties	
Service charge	0.60

Total Expenses	22.00
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Monthly cash flow	53.00
Year-to-date cash flow	194.99

Bank Balance	1036.25
Prepaid room rental	171.20
Coffee float	5.00

Net Worth	1212.45
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